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"Newspaper Notes, a Continuation: Military Reconstruction." *Chronicles of Smith County, Texas* 34 no. 1 (Summer 1995): 31-37.

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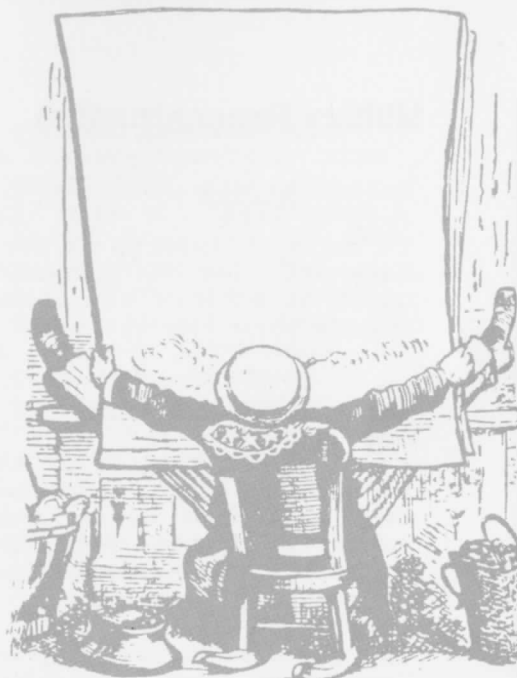
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Newspaper Notes

a continuation

Gleaning Smith County happenings from area newspapers

by Vicki Betts



The loss of the backfiles of the Tyler newspapers to fire in the early twentieth century left a serious gap in primary sources for the Smith County historian. Fortunately, however, other area papers often quoted excerpts of entire articles from the Reporter, States Rights Sentinel, and other local publications, and a lively exchange between editors added to the flavor of the Civil War and Reconstruction era.

While conducting research for Smith County, Texas, in the Civil War, I compiled a file of articles from 1860 through 1865 (later expanded to 1875) which mentioned Tyler or Smith County. Sometimes tragic, often funny, and always informative, this file has proven to be a valuable source of information for one of the most interesting periods of our history. Clips on one topic, military reconstruction, are printed here as they appeared over one hundred years ago. Locations of microfilm copies of the newspapers consulted are listed below.

Austin Democratic Statesman ----	University of Texas at Tyler
Austin State Gazette -----	University of North Texas
Austin Weekly Southern	
Intelligencer -----	Texas A&M University
Clarksville Standard -----	East Texas State University
Daily Austin Republican -----	East Texas State University
Dallas Herald -----	East Texas State University
Galveston Tri-Weekly News -----	East Texas State University
Galveston Weekly News.....	East Texas State University
Galveston Flake's Bulletin ----	
Galveston Daily News-----	
Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph----	
Marshall Harrison Flag-----	
Marshall Texas Republican-----	

previous installments: "religion" - 1988, "agriculture" - 1988, "crime and punishment" - Summer 1989, "transportation" - Summer 1990, "human interest" - Winter 1990, "newspapers" - Summer 1992, "businesses & communications, "marriages & deaths," - Summer 1993, "politics and elections," - Summer 1994.

Military Reconstruction

Dallas Herald

July 1, 1865,

"He also informs us that there was a regiment of infantry at Marshall, and one company of calvary at Tyler. Everything was quiet at each of the above places, and no interference by the troops with the citizens in any manner.

Galveston Daily News

July 22, 1865

The Tyler Journal of the 8th remarks as follows: "Maj. Vredenburg with a detachment of the 10th Illinois Cavalry, have been stationed at the Armory near this place for several weeks, gathering up government property. The Major by his pleasant manners and gentlemanly bearing has won the esteem and good will of the people generally, [sic] we are gratified to learn through the Major, that both citizens and soldiers are freely returning the government property taken previous to the surrender of this Department. Maj. Vredenburg with his file of men left this place on Wednesday last for Shreveport.

Austin Weekly Southern Intelligencer

September 15, 1865

AMNESTY OATH.--The people are coming up promptly to accept the President's amnesty. Judge Earle informs us that he had already administered the oath to 160 persons. Smith county will soon be in the Union again--not only mechanically so, but in good faith. There is much better feeling existing with the people toward the government that we had expected. This perhaps originates from the absence of any military _____ in our midst, and the quiet, peaceable manner in which we are permitted to restore our rights of citizenship. It is not such a bad thing after all, since men from among _____ men who have been fellow rebels with _____ are permitted to do the agreeable in extending the right hand of fellowship to us as we return to the Union fold. There is no insincerity among our people in taking this oath. Ours is an earnest people, and take this oath in good faith, notwithstanding it may be against their convictions of justice, so far as it concerns the emancipation of slaves.--Tyler Report-er.

Houston Tri-weekly Telegraph

October 2, 1865

Long articles quoting from the Tyler Journal and Reporter on the uselessness of harboring resentment against the new way of things and encouraging people to look ahead. Included: "We regret that such a feeling of indifference exists. We have formerly urged our people to come forward and take the oath--and would again urge them to do so. Up to this time about six hundred have taken the oath in Smith County, out of a voting population of about 1500." from the Journal.

Marshall Harrison Flag

July 12, 1866

Colonel: I have the honor to state that since the removal of the cavalry from this point the people without the immediate reach of this office, have taken advantage of the comparatively unprotected condition of freed people to continue to an aggravated degree the old system of slavery. Scarcely a day passes but that freedmen demonstrate by exhibiting their wounds

the fact than in this section, where the present power of the Bureau cannot read, they are held in even a worse condition than before. And to my certain knowledge in Panola, Rusk, Cherokee, Smith, Upshur and Marion counties, slavery, with all its former horrors exists. The Negroes are not free there. They are not even allowed the privileges they enjoyed before the emancipations. There are sections of this (Harrison) county, also, where freed people are grossly mistreated. Yet having only infantry here, it is impossible to arrest the offenders, as they are invariably warned by people on the road, or even in town here, before they can be reached. I feel it my solemn duty to make this representation, and to respectfully suggest that if a force of twenty-five cavalry could be sent here, could and would penetrate into these hard sections, and bring the offenders to justice and punishment. There is a company of sixty of the 80th U.S. C.I., here, but they do not succeed in arresting offenders, even near here, and it is foolishness to dispatch them twenty-five or thirty miles with any hope of success.

I also would beg leave to respectfully state that there are proven cases of gross brutality and outrage on file in this office.

Hoping that this subject may receive the attention of the assistant commissioner.

I am Colonel, very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,
Q. W. BEEBEE,
1st Lieut. & R. C. Sub-Asst. Com.

Marshall Texas Republican

September 22, 1866

The Tyler Reporter says they have a squad of U. S. Soldiers there. An Arkansian coming into town and perceiving them, "and not knowing that the war had closed" pulled out a six-shooter and fired at one of them, and then made off. No damage done.

Dallas Herald

April 13, 1867

"Brevet Lieutenant Colonel Montgomery with a detachment of fifty or sixty U.S. troops, reached this place a few days ago. We suppose the intention is to keep this body of troops stationed here permanently while the State is under military rule. We have not formed the acquaintance of Col. M., but understand he comes well recommended as a soldier and gentleman. We trust the intercourse between soldier and citizen maybe attended by no occurrence to prevent a mutual good opinion of each other. We understand that a branch of the freedmen's bureau will be opened here. Tyler Reporter.

Marshall Texas Republican

June 22, 1867

The Tyler Reporter of the 12th publishes the following:
About 200 additional troops arrived at this post last week.

Marshall Texas Republican

July 13, 1867

The Fourth of July was celebrated day before yesterday by the military garrison of this place, who turned out in their best style to do honor to that day, which every American has reason to be proud of.--Tyler Index.

Galveston Flakes's Bulletin

July 19, 1867

SUM--Field officers' courts, detailed by Bvt. Major Gen. Griffin Brevet Colonel Levi C. Bootes, Major Twenty-sixth U.S. Infantry for a Field Officers' Court at the Post of Tyler, Texas.

Dallas Herald

March 28, 1868,

In a series of orders from Headquarters District of Texas, dated February 25th, 27th and 28th, and March 4th, Gen. Reynolds orders nearly if not quite all the temporary posts in the Interior of the State discontinued and the troops now occupying them to the frontier, to garrison the new line of posts recently established by Gen. Hancock . . .

The post of Tyler, Smith county, Texas, is hereby discontinued.

The Companies of the 26th U.S. Infantry, there stationed, (Tyler) will proceed to Point Isabel, Texas.

Marshall Texas Republican

May 29, 1868

Lt. Gregory, in charge of the Bureau at Tyler, was shot, on the 9th, by the accidental discharge of a pistol. The Reporter says the wound is severe but not dangerous.

Daily Austin Republican

August 4, 1868

"Judge Hancock stated in his speech on Saturday last, that there has been but one instance of opposition to the military authorities in Texas, and that took place sometime ago in Free-stone county. . . . We would also inform him that at Tyler the officer in command has been for some time on the defensive, several of his men have been killed and reinforcements have been called for by the officer to enable him to hold the post.

Dallas Herald

August 24 1867

On Saturday evening last a difficulty occurred at Tyler, between two citizens, a Mr. Perry, and a Mr. Hut Murray. Before any blows were struck a U.S. Sergeant, by the name of Crowley, connected with the stationed troops, interfered, and taking a stick from Perry struck Murry one or two blows and the latter drew his knife, and inflicted several severe wounds upon the Sergeant. Hut Murray was immediately arrested and taken to jail. At night a number of soldiers attacked the jail, with the intention of taking vengeance upon the prisoner. Lt. Col. Montgomery, commanding the troops, fortunately made his appearance and stopped the riotous proceedings. The next night the soldiers returned in stronger force, secured the keys, brought forth the prisoner and shot him.

We learn there were a sufficient number of troops guarding the jail to have prevented the outrage, had they preformed their duty. Murry, Perry, and the Sergeant are all represented to have been intoxicated. This is bad conduct on the part of a portion of the troops. From what we have heard of Col. Montgomery, the guilty parties are likely to be punished.--Marshall Republican, 17th inst.

Marshall Texas Republican

August 28, 1868

The present Bureau Agent [fold in paper] in a series of difficulties ever since he has been there, and there have been constant apprehensions of outbreaks, violence, and bloodshed. Why is this? A more orderly, law-abiding pleasant place than Tyler cannot be found in the State. That has been the character of the place for years. We venture to say that any respectable officer, not disposed to assume more authority than reasonably belongs to him, and let the civil law take its coarse, rendering it only such assistance as may enable its officers to faithfully perform their duty, can get along without the slightest difficulty. More than this, he will be treated with respect and courtesy. But unfortunately, if all accounts be true, Lt. Barrett is deficient in good sense, as all such men are, and as his own conduct proves, and exercises neither judgment nor prudence. He is one of that class that forgets the war is over, and chooses to regard every man who objects to his tyrannical rule, as a "rebel," or "rebel sympathizer," and an enemy to the government. Such men are capable of doing an infinite amount of mischief. They disorganize and demoralize society, inculcate unnecessarily and wickedly a hatred of the government, and form, by their outrageous conduct, an excuse to the lawless for their violations of the law. But for them the people would, from their own virtuous and patriotic volition, put down everything in the shape of disorder. They poison all the springs of virtuous action. Violent politicians, when they ought to be soldiers, with "Negro on the brain," when they should eschew politics, and tyrants by nature, when they ought to be impartial, their moral instincts are corrupted or rendered obtuse by their own passions. When a community is cursed by such a man, they ought to hold public meetings and pass resolutions exhibiting his conduct, and send to "headquarters" for his removal, until it is effected, and a sensible man put in his place. We are tired of hearing of Lt. Barrett and his insane difficulties. We hope that in a spirit of kindness and mercy, he will be sent to the frontier, where his fighting proclivities will find vent in either killing the Indians or driving them into the desert. The intelligence that his present position will be properly supplied, very soon, will be cheering to our Tyler friends.

Marshall Texas Republican

October 2, 1868

The following companies have been sent from this point to the interior of the State:

Tyler--Brv't. Maj. Jewett, with 1 company.

Daily Austin Republican

December 19, 1868

The following is the report of Bvt. Maj. Gen. Reynolds, commanding the Fifth Military District, which embraces the State of Texas.

Hdqrs. Mil. Dist. State of Tex.

Austin, Nov. 4, 1868.

To the Adj. Gen. of the United States, Washington, D.C. . . .

Armed organizations, generally known as Ku-Klux Klan, exist independently or in concert with armed bands in many parts of Texas, but are most numerous, bold, and aggressive east of the Trinity River. The precise objects of these organizations cannot be readily explained; but it seems in this State to be to disarm, rob, and in many cases murder Union men and Negroes, and, as occasion may offer, murder United States officers and soldiers; also to intimidate every one who knows anything about the organization, but who will not join it. The civil law east of the Trinity river is almost a dead letter. In some counties the civil

officers are all, or a portion of them, members of the Klan. In other counties where the civil officers will not join the Klan, or some other armed band, they have been compelled to leave their counties. The examples are Van Zandt, Smith and Marion counties.

J. J. Reynolds
Bvt. Maj. Gen., U.S.A., Comd'g.

Daily Austin Republican

January 18, 1869

SUM--Report of Charles A. Vernou, 1st Lieutenant, 4th U. S. Cavalry A.D.C. to Bvt. Capt. C. L. Roberts A.D.C. & A.A.A. Gen., Hdqrs, 5th Military District.

"I passed through Wood and Smith counties to Tyler. This place is one of the headquarters of the KuKlux, and it is almost impossible for a Union man to live in or around it.

All through the country which I have passed, I found the Negroes had not only been disarmed but dismounted, and that they live in fear of their lives not knowing at what time or hour their houses would be surrounded by armed men and their lives sacrificed. Through my whole trip I found them to be quiet and industrious, and in every way law-abiding.

At Tyler I was unfortunately taken ill, and, under telegraphic instructions from your office, I sent the detachment to Austin, under command of Lt. James W. Lutherberry, 17th Infantry.

Marshall Texas Republican

February 12, 1869,

The United States troops at Tyler commanded by Major Jewett, have been ordered to Canton, Van Zandt county, and the former place will be for the present, without a garrison.

The departure of Major Jewett and his command, is generally regretted by the law abiding citizens of Tyler; he has proved himself a faithful officer, discharging his duties without political bias, hence, the Radicals, as they could not use him, rejoice at his removal.

Marshall Texas Republican

March 5, 1869,

Brevet Major George Shorkley in command of a company of the 15th Infantry has been removed from Clarksville to Tyler. We have every reason to believe that he is a good man, and that our Tyler friends will be much pleased with him, the Index to *he contrary notwithstanding.

Daily Austin Republican

September 22, 1869

SUM--Army requesting sealed proposals to furnish fresh beef to United States troops stationed at 16 places, including Tyler--also East Texas towns of Greenville, Clarksville Jefferson, Nacogdoches, and Sulfur Springs. Contracts due by November 10, to begin January 1, 1870.

Dallas Herald

November 6, 1869

Col. Morris, one of the members of the Military Commission now in session at Waco, passed through this city last week enroute for Waco. He has been in command of the Post at Tyler for several months. Col. M has won the esteem of every good citizen, wherever he is known in Texas.

Daily Austin Republican

January 3, 1870

SUM--Proposals for fresh beef for troops in 9 places including Tyler. Contract to begin February 1, 1870, deadline January 19.

Daily Austin Republican

May 27, 1870

From the Tyler Reporter we learn that two of the parties confined in the stockades at that place, Mr. J. H. Bullard and Mr. James Gordon, have been turned over to the civil authorities. The Reporter says:

We understand that the commandant of the Post has offered to deliver the prisoners, still in custody, to our sheriff, but as they are citizens of other counties, against whom he has no process, he does not feel authorized to receive them.

For further "Chronicles" articles on the Reconstruction era in Smith County, see:

"The Murder of Godley & House", 1871
letter - Fall 1968

"Mr. Republican, Silas D. Wood", by
James Smallwood - spring 1970

"The Freedman's Bureau", by Barry A.
Crouch - Spring 1972

"View From Within: Letters of Gre-
gory Barrett, Freedmen's Bureau
Agent", by Barry Crouch - Winter
1973

"Other Views, Two items on the
Barrett-Kennedy Episode during
Reconstruction Days in Tyler", -
winter 1973

"Bullets, Ballots & Bayonets: Recon-
struction Politics and Elections in
Smith County, 1886-1873", by John P.
Carrier - Summer 1974

"From Slavery to Freedom: Smith
County's Black Community in 1870: A
statistical Overview", by James
smallwood - summer 1979

"A Reconstruction Tragedy in Texas,
The Murder of Hut Murray", by Andrew
Leath - 1988

"Registered Voters, 1872", By Janet
Burks - summer 1989

"Newspaper Notes, a continuation -
Politics and Elections", By Vicki
Betts - Summer 1994

